

MEETING IN HEAVEN.

WE SHALL RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER IN THE OTHER WORLD.

The Eloquent Discourse of Dr. Talmage on the Recognition of Friends and Relatives in Heaven.

Dr. Talmage preached to an enormous outdoor gathering at Wa. Minn., on Sunday. His subject was, "Meeting Our Friends in Heaven." The eminent clergyman took for his text 2 Samuel, xii, 23: "I shall go to him." His sermon was as follows:

There is a very sick child in the abode of David, the king. Disease, which stalks up the dark lane of the poor and puts its smothering hand on the lip and nostril of the wan and wasted, also mounts the palace stairs and, bending over the pillow, blows into the face of a young prince the frosts of pain and death. Tears are wine to the king of terrors. Alas! for David the king. He can neither sleep nor eat, and lies prostrate on his face, weeping and wailing until the palace rings with the outcry of woe.

What are courtly attendants, or victorious armies, or conquered provinces, under such circumstances? What to any parent are splendid surroundings when his child is sick? Seven days have passed on. Then in that great house two eyelids are gently closed, two little hands folded, two little feet quiet, one heart still. The servants come to hear the tidings to the king, but they cannot make up their minds to tell him, and they stand at the door whispering about the matter, and David hears them and he looks up and says to them, "Is the child dead?" "Yes, he is dead," David rushes himself up, washes himself, puts on new apparel, and sits down to food. What power hushed that tempest? What strength was it that lifted up that king whom grief had dethroned? Oh, it was the thought that he would come again into the possession of that darling child. No grave digger's spade could hide him. The wintry blasts of death could not put out the bright light. There would be a force somewhere that with silver hammer would weld the broken links. In a city where the hoofs of the pale horse never strike the pavement he would clasp his lost treasure. He wipes away the tears from his eyes, and cleary the exclaims, "I shall go to him."

Was David right or wrong? If we part on earth will we meet again in the next world? "Well," says some one, "that seems to be an impossibility. Heaven is so large a place, we never could find our kindred there." Going into some city, without having appointed a time and place for meeting, you might wander around for weeks and for months, and perhaps for years, and never see each other, and heaven is vaster than all earthly cities together, and how are you going to find your departed friend in that country? It is so vast a realm. John went up on one mountain of inspiration, and he looked off upon the multitude, and he said, "Thousands of thousands." Then he came upon a greater altitude of inspiration and looked off upon it again, and he said, "A hundred and forty and four thousand and thousands of thousands." And he came on a still greater height of inspiration, and he looked off again, and exclaimed, "A great multitude that no man can number." Now, I ask, how are you going to find your friends in such a throng as that? Is not this idea we have been entertaining, after all, a falsity? Is this no trine of future recognition of friends in heaven a guess, a myth, a whim, or is it a Titanic foundation upon which the soul pierced of all ages may build a glorious hope? Intense question! Every heart in this audience throbs right into it. There is in every soul here the tomb of at least one dead.

Tremendous question! It makes the lip quiver, and the cheek flush, and the entire nature thrill: Shall we know each other there? I get letters almost every month asking me to discuss this subject. I get a letter in a bold, scholarly hand, on gilt-edged paper, asking me to discuss this question, and I say, "Ah! that is a curious man, and he wants a curious question solved." But I get another letter. It is written with a trembling hand, and on what seems to be a torn-out leaf of a book, and here and there is the mark of a tear; and I say, "Oh, that is a broken heart and it wants to be comforted."

The object of this sermon is to take this theory out of the region of surmise and speculation into the region of positive certainty. People say: "It would be very pleasant if that doctrine were true. I hope it may be true. Perhaps it is true. I wish it were true." But I believe that I can bring an accumulation of argument to bear upon this matter which will prove the doctrine of future recognition as plainly as that there is any heaven at all, and that the kiss of reunion at the celestial gate will be as certain as the dying kiss at the door of the sepulchre.

Now, when you are going to build a ship you must get the right kind of timber. You lay the keel and make the framework of the very best materials, the keelson, stanchions, plank-shear, counter timber-knee, transoms, all of solid oak. You may build a ship of lighter material, but when the cyclone comes on it will go down. Now we may have a great many beautiful theories about the future world,

built out of our own fancy, and they do very well as long as we have smooth sailing in the world, but when the storms of sorrow come upon us, and the hurricane of death, we will be swamped—we will be foundered. We want a theory built out of the solid oak of God's eternal word.

The doctrine of future recognition is not so often positively stated in the Word of God as implied, and you know, my friends, that that is, after all, the strongest mode of affirmation. Your friend travels in foreign lands. He comes home. He does not begin by arguing with you to prove that there are such places as London and Stockholm and Paris and Dresden and Berlin, but his conversation implies it. And so this Bible does not so positively state this theory as, all up and down its chapters, it takes it for granted. What does my text imply? "I shall go to him." What consolation would it be to David to go to his child if he would not know him?

The Bible indicates, over and over again, that the angels know each other; and then the Bible says that we are to be higher than the angels, and if the angels have the power of recognition, shall not we, who are to be higher than they in the next realm, have as good eyesight and as good capacity? What did Christ mean, in his conversation with Mary and Martha, when he said, "Thy brother shall rise again?" It was as much as to say, "Don't cry. Don't wear yourself out with this trouble. You will see him again." Thy brother shall rise again. The Bible describes heaven as a great home circle. Well, now, that would be a very queer home circle where the members did not know each other. The Bible describes death as a sleep. If we know each other before we go to sleep, shall we know each other after we wake up? Oh, yes. We will know each other a great deal better then than now, "for now," says the apostle, "we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." It will be my purified, enthroned, and glorified body gazing on your purified, enthroned, and glorified body.

Now, I demand, if you believe the Bible, that you take this theory of future recognition out of the realm of speculation and surmise into the region of positive certainty, and no more keep saying, "I hope it is so; I have an idea it is so; I guess it is so." Be able to say, with all the concentrated energy of body, mind and soul, "I know it is so."

There are, in addition to these Bible arguments, other reasons why I place, because the rejection of it implies the entire obliteration of our memory. Can it be possible that we shall forget forever those with whose walk, look, manner we have been so long familiar? Will death come and with a sharp keen blade hew away this faculty of memory? Abraham said to Dives, "Son, remember." If the excited and lost remember, will not the enthroned remember?

Again: I accept the doctrine of future recognition because the world's expectancy affirms it. In all lands and ages this theory is received. What form of religion planted it? No form of religion, for it is received under all forms of religion. Then, I argue, a sentiment, a feeling, an anticipation, universally planted, must have been God-implemented, and if God-implemented, it is rightfully implanted. Socrates writes: "Who purchase a meeting with Olympus and Homer? If it be true that this is the consequence of death, I could be able to die often." Among the Danes, when a master dies his servant sometimes stabs himself that he may serve his master in the future coming. Cicero, living before Christ's coming, said: "O glorious day when I shall retire from this low and sordid scene to associate with the divine assembly of departed spirits, and not only with the one I have just now mentioned, but my dear Cato, the best of sons and most faithful of men. If I seemed to bear his death with fortitude, it was by no means that I did not most sensibly feel the loss I had sustained. It was because I was supported by the consoling reflection that we could not long be separated." The Norwegian believes it. The Indian believes it. The Swiss believes it. The Turk believes it. Under every sky, by every river, in every zone, the theory is adopted; and so I say a principle universally implanted must be God-implemented, and hence a right belief. The argument is irresistible.

Again: I adopt this theory because there are features of moral, temperament and features of the soul that will distinguish us forever. How do we know each other in this world? Is it merely by the color of the eye, or the length of the hair, or the facial proportions? Oh, no. It is by the disposition as well as by natural affinity, using the word in the very best sense and not in the bad sense, and if in the dust our body should perish and lie there forever, and there should be no resurrection, still the soul has enough features and the disposition has enough features to make us distinguishable. I can understand how in sickness a man will become so delirious that he will not know his own friends but will be blasted with such insufferable idiocy, that, standing beside our friends for all eternity, we will never guess who they are!

There is another before the throne of God. You say her joy is full. Is it? You say there can be no augmentation of it. Cannot there be? Her son was a wanderer and a vagabond on the earth when that good mother died. He broke her old heart. She died leaving him in the wilderness of sin. She is before the

throne of God now. Years pass and that son repents of his crimes and gives his heart to God and becomes a useful Christian, and dies and enters the gates of heaven. You tell me that that mother's joy cannot be augmented. Let them confront each other, the son and the mother. "Oh," she says to the angels of God, "rejoice with me! The dead is alive again, and the lost is found. Hallelujah! I never expected to see this lost one come back."

The Bible says nations are to be born in a day. When China comes to God will it not know Mr. Abel? When India comes will it not know Dr. John Scudder? When the Indians come to God will they not know David Brainerd?

I see a soul entering heaven at last with covered face for Christ, and feeling some down with unworthiness, and it says to itself, "I have no right to be here." A voice from a throne says, "Oh, you forget that Sunday school class you invited to Christ! I was one of them." And another voice says, "You forget that poor man to whom you gave a loaf of bread, and told of the heavenly bread. I was that man." And another says, "You forget that sick one to whom you gave medicine for the body and the soul. I was that one." And then Christ, from a throne overlooking all the rest, will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it to me." And then the seraphs will take their harps from the side of the throne and cry, "What song shall it be?" And Christ bending over the harpers, shall say, "It shall be the Harvest Home."

One more thing that I want to say to you: I believe that so many in their last hour on earth have confirmed this theory. I speak not of persons who have been delirious in their last moments and knew not what they were about, but of persons who died in calmness and placidity, and who were not naturally superstitious, often the glories of heaven have struck the dying pillow, and the departing man has said he saw and heard those who had gone away from him. How often it is in the dying moments parents see their departed children and children see their departed parents! I came down to the banks of the Mohawk river. It was evening and I wanted to go over the river, and so I waded my hat and shouted, and after awhile I saw some one waving on the opposite bank, and I heard him shout, and the boat

transported. And so I suppose it will be in the evening of our life. We will come down to the river of death and give a signal to our friends on the other shore, and they will give a signal back to us, and the boat comes, and our departed kindred are the oarsmen, the fires of the setting day tinging the tops of the paddles. Oh, have you never sat by such a deathbed? In that hour you hear the departing soul cry, "Hark! look! You hearkened and you looked. A little child pining away because of the death of its mother, getting weaker and weaker every day, was taken into the room where hung the picture of her mother. She seemed to enjoy looking at it, and then she was taken away, and after awhile died. In the last moment that wan and wasted little face lifted her hands, while her face lighted with the glory of the world, and she cried out, 'Mother! you left me to us, and the boat comes, and our departed kindred are the oarsmen, the fires of the setting day tinging the tops of the paddles. 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